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ABSTRACT

The 12 activities presented in this pamphlet are intended to help make vocabulary study a stimulating experience for both teacher and student. The activities are as follows: (1) a commercially prepared list of suggestions for vocabulary development, (2) an exercise designed to relate vocabulary study to every day reading, (3) a variation of the dictionary search exercise, (4) a sentence and paragraph building activity that begins with the study of prefixes, (5) a word analogy exercise, (6) a list of brain teasers, (7) the "Word Power" sections from "Readers' Digest," (8) model writing exercises, (9) a word substitution activity, (10) the Vocabulary Development packet published by the "Newsweek" Language Arts Program, (11) an activity to familiarize students with words commonly used on standardized tests, and (12) a library use exercise designed to familiarize students with books about language. The pamphlet also suggests that teachers carefully choose the words they use in class in order to make their lessons more meaningful. (FL)

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SOME VOCABULARY ACTIVITIES WORTH TEACHING ABOUT

Sr. Helena S. Brand

Success in daily assignments, taking tests, business and social communication depends on a nice fusion of reading, writing and speaking skills.

Word usage is basic to each of these skills. Usage implies a stock of language from which to draw. It demands continuous input and development of the vocabulary stockpile.

A time-honored method of teaching vocabulary is the use of word lists and dictionary; another is learning words in context, a third is exploring the *Thesaurus*. However, a little variety can spice the learning experiences in a classroom.

This paper offers a mix of activities, some quite academic, other half fun, but all wholly serious in their objective, to make the vocabulary unit a stimulating experience for both teacher and student.

Activity 1: The International Paper Company publishes an interview with Tony Randall on the importance of vocabulary development. Entitled, "How to Improve Your Vocabulary," the article developes five points: a) Guess the meaning in context; b) Look it up; c) Dig the meaning from the roots; d) Learn something about prefixes; e) Put new words to work.

Tony's personality puts a little color into the lesson and the format is attractive: good print, direct, simply worded paragraphs. Interesting facts help: English has the largest vocabulary of any language in the world, over 1,000,000 words. The average adult has between 30,000 and 60,000.

Teachers may request copies for their classes. Write to: "Power of the Printed Word," International Paper Co., Dept. 2, P.O. Box 290, Elmsford, N.Y. 10523.

Activity 2: A 1979 text, "Reading With a Purpose," Simmons and Millet, HBJ, gave me an idea for a Vocabulary Unit that I use each quarter.

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Geared for intermediate and high school, the text relates Vocabulary learning to every-day reading needs. Lessons include such titles as "Reading Medicine Labels," "Utility Meters," "Help Wanted Ads," "Withholding Allowance Certificates." The book impressed me so much that I wrote for permission to duplicate the Table of Contents and share it with a Developmental Reading Class at Portland State University. I also formulated a reading unit based on "practical" sources.

Each week during the quarter, my high school vocabulary classes present three samples of "every-day" readings mounted neatly. They list, along the side, *words special* to the subject. They underline what they consider the most significant information in the sample. Grape Nuts box sides are popular; warnings about poison; drivers' manuel pages; knitting directions; leaflets from the Chamber of Commerce, and from banks in the area are just a few of the great variety of reading samples the students choose.

A somewhat similar series of texts is designed for the fourth to sixth grade levels. Published by Barnell Loft, Ltd., 958 Church Street, Baldwin, N.Y. 11510, the *Picto-Cabulary Series* includes the following workbooks: "Words Around the Neighborhood"; "Words Around the House", "Words to Eat", "Words to Wear", "Words to Meet", "Descriptive Words."

A similar unit for high school could include "Supermarket Words", "Job Application Words", "Drugstore Words", "Banking Words", "Restaurant Words", "Entertainment Words", "Clothing/Style Words", "Credit Application Words", "Political Words."

Activity 3: At the October 9, 1981, OCTE Workshop at Madison High School, Portland, one of the teachers recommended a variation of Dictionary Search. Instead of listing words, the instructor creates a set of questions using words that she wants the student to learn. Example: "How would you feel if you were asphyxiated?" The students look up the word and write an answer using the word in their replies. A similar assignment is described in October 9, 1981, issue of *The Reading Teacher*.

Activity 4: Prefixes listed with words to identify them is a good standard presentation. Here is a device that arounsed "creative juices", motivated students to read and reread their prefix list and use prefixes in terms of their meaning.

Given the prefixes:

ab	from/off	extra	outside
ad	to/near/toward	intra	within
ante	before	contra	against
post	following/after	inter	between
bi	two	bene	good
ex	out of/away /former	mal	evil
in/im	in/not		

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Design a story using local places and references:
Example: Far ab_____ in the hills, far ex_____

Example: Far (ab)_____ in the hills, far (ex)_____ heavy, five o'clock traffic; but (ad)_____ a winding road along the Clackamas River on their way to Estacada, (bi)_____ cyclists sped along the tree shaded road. They had (e)_____ Portland. They stopped (ad)_____ a grassy area, leaned their cycles (contra)_____ a tree. "This is (bene)_____ for us. We are (ex)_____ from the traffic rat-race."

Directions: a) Fill in the blanks with prefixes that will complete the sentences. b) Now, write a five sentence story in which you try to use all of the prefixes. c) Expect to share it with the class.

Students could also be directed to make up words using only prefixes, and then to try them on their companions. Examples: contramal, interbene, exintra.

Activity 5: New words are learned through relationships. Students who foresee taking the SAT, AP tests, College Board and Graduate Record Examinations would profit from having some formal experience in analyzing relationships between words, because analogy questions are a weighty characteristic of these examinations.

The Miller Analogy Tests (G.k. Gruber and E.C. Gruber, N.Y., Simon and Schuster, 1972) lists the following fifteen kinds of word relationships. The first half of the sample analogy is included.

Purpose (hammer-nail); Cause/Effect (tickle-laugh); Part/Whole (petal-flower); Part/Part (finger-toe); Action/Object (open-book); Object/Action (salad-toss); Synonym (little-tiny); Antonym (North-South); Place (Seattle-Washington); Degree (cool-frigid); Characteristic (energy-health); Sequence (Monday-Tuesday); Grammatical (around-between); Numerical (three-four); Association (violence-storm).

Although the Miller text provides examples of these word relationships, the teacher who formulates his own set of examples renews his understanding of how a student must "think" to recognize the relationship. A sample of a complete analogy follows:

> Seattle-Washington: (a) France-Europe, (b) Canada-Montreal, (c) New York-New York; (d) Portland-Hermiston.

The relationship is city-state (part-whole) and so the correct analogy is (c).

When we study analogies, I find it profitable for students to try out several without help. When I dictate the answers, they feel good about the ones they "got on their own" and challenge the answers they understand.

At the point of challenge, teaching begins. The fifteen relationships are explored. Students compose their own original examples. In my practical reading classes, ten minutes, daily, for as long as I can manage it, is given to experiences with analogies. Hopefully, students will develop a desire for exact usage as well as do better in examinations.

Activity 6: Guessing games have appeal. The following "game" was published several years ago in *Readers' Digest*. A fun exercise in careful reading, *Brain Teasers* points up the importance of vowels in our language. Thurber's *The Wonderful O* is an enjoyable follow-up to this activity.

BRAIN TEASERS

1. What is it that occurs once in a second, once in a month, once in a century, yet not at all in a year or week?

The Machinist

2. By inserting the same letter 16 times in appropriate places this jumble of letters will be transformed into a sentence of some sense: VRYVNINGRNSTARNDIGHTN CNTSXCIINGLYASILY. *Morris Mandel in Jewish Press*

3. Add the missing vowels to these three well-known proverbs:

BRDNTHHNDSWRTHTWNTHBSH
LKBFRYLP
STTCHNTMSVSVN *Sunshine Magazine*

4. What word contains seven letters, in which the first *two* letters make reference to a man the first *three* to a women, the first *four* letters identify a great man and all *seven* identify a great woman? *Ideas for Better Living*

5. A bookkeeper noticed there were two consecutive double letters in the word balloon. She found other examples, such as woolly and spittoon. Then she tried to think of a word with three consecutive pairs of double letters. She couldn't think of any. Can you?

Robin Marchard in Science World

Answers to "Brain Teasers" 1. The letter N. 2. All it needs is the letter E: Every evening Ernest earned eighteen cents exceedingly easily. 3. A BIRD IN THE HAND IS WORTH TWO IN THE BUSH, LOOK BEFORE YOU LEAP, A STITCH IN TIME SAVES NINE. 4. HEROINE. 5. BOOKKEEPER is one that should have come quickly to mind.

Activity 7: *Word Power* became a weekly unit in a Vocabulary class when *The Readers' Digest* gave me permission to duplicate the pages from nine issues. Since the *Digest* was a real life magazine and not a textbook, class attitude was accepting and interested.

Activity 8: Model Writing forces Vocabulary expansion, and also a close look at sentence structure and development. Given a model, the student chooses a topic such as the skier, the Thunderbird, the quarterback (joe Namath?), and writes a "moving" description following the sentence development as closely as

possible.

Example:

The waves moved rhythemically toward us
sparkling,
growing taller,
and more powerful
until the shining crest burst
breaking into blue-white foam
piling up
a frothing mound
upon the beach. *Source unknown*

Writing a sentence in "open structure" directs the student's eyes to the parts of the sentence much more efficiently than does the conventional prose structure.

This activity can be extended into modeling exercises based on interesting paragraphs. Triple space the lines so that students can write above the sentence elements.

Activity 9: Favorite, often used words come easy. Students use the same descriptive words over and over again in their writing. The following exercise in Word Choice came from the Language Arts file at Rex Putnam High School, Milwaukie, Oregon.

WORD CHOICE WORKSHEET

Replace the underlined (bold) word with a more exact, interesting expression.

1. It was a **great** day for the home team. There was a **great** crowd of watchers. Our pitcher was surely **great,** and all the fellow in the field gave him **great** support. The score stood tied in the last inning when one of our batters smashed a **great** drive over the out-fielder's head. Amid **great** cheering, he came safely home. It was a **great** game, and we won.

2. I would like to get a **good** job. I mean a job with **good** hours and, of course, the next requirement would be a **good** boss, too. What's the use of working unless it's in a **good** place with **good** atmosphere and **good** co-workers? If I get a **good** job, I'll make **good.**

3. We had **a lot** of fun at the party. **A lot** of kids from school were there so we had **a lot** to talk about. There was **a lot** of food to nibble on and **a lot** of records for dancing so we stayed **a lot** later than we expected.

4. He **got out** of be, **walked slowly** to the bathroom, and **put** some water on his sleepy face. He then **walked** back to his room and **quickly put on** his clothes. Realizing his ride would be here in five minutes, he **ran down** the stairs, **ate** some breakfast, and **picked up** his books from the table. As the horn honked, he **put on** his jacket and **put** a piece of toast in his mouth. Then he **opened** the door quickly and **ran** to the car.

Revising examples of boring word repetition may help students to see the need for revision in their compositions.

Activity 10: An excellent packet on Vocabulary Development is published by the *Newsweek* Language Arts Program. It provides four dittoes ready to go: "Word Parts", "Word Parts Analyzed", "Prefixes and Roots", and "Suffixes and Roots". The semantic background and a Teacher's Guide are helpful. Write to Mary Francis Hickey, Editor, *Newsweek Educational Program*, 444 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10022 for information.

Activity 11: Clue Words for taking tests make a practical vocabulary unit. A booklet, "Ready or Not;

Preparation for Exams," is published by PCC. Copies may be picked up at the Drop-in Center, Sylvania, Portland, Oregon. Listed are the following words:

1. analyze	10. enumerate
2. comment on	11. list
3. compare	12. outline
4. contrast	13. prove
5. criticize	14. relate
6. define	15.review
7. describe	16. state
8. diagram	17. summarize
9. discuss	18. trace.

Deciding on the exact meaning of each of these directive words and taking trial mini-tests will help the student interpret and produce the information the teacher wants.

Example:

a) Analyze a pizza
b) Comment on a pizza
c) Criticize a pizza
d) Define a pizza

Activity 12: A vocabulary teacher's careful choice of words may make his lesson plans more useful. Using specific words helps, so he avoids to know, to understand, to appreciate, to enjoy, to be interested in, to be motivated, to be aware of, to be able to, to think, to listen; and moves to words open to fewer interpretations: to write, to recite, to identify, to differentiate, to solve, to construct, to list, to name, to state a rule, to describe, to read, to answer, to weigh, to compare, to contrast, to add, to subtract.

Activity 13: Students have only a faint concept of the many kinds of books written about language. With the assistance of our school librarian, each student is provided with a list of books complete with call number and a few lines of identification.

One day a week they brouse the shelves. Their assignment is somewhat elastic. If they find a book that tells the stories of words, they are to list a number of words and briefly tell the story of each. If they find a book on word origins, they list the words and tell what language the word came from originally and record the changes it has experienced. If the book is the essay-chapter type, they summarize a chapter in a one-page report.

Finally, just a thought. A vocabulary course may have quite a bit to do with a conversation between Humpty Dumpty and Alice:

"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean, neither more nor less."

"The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean different things."

"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master — that's all."

Lewis Carroll
Through the Looking Glass